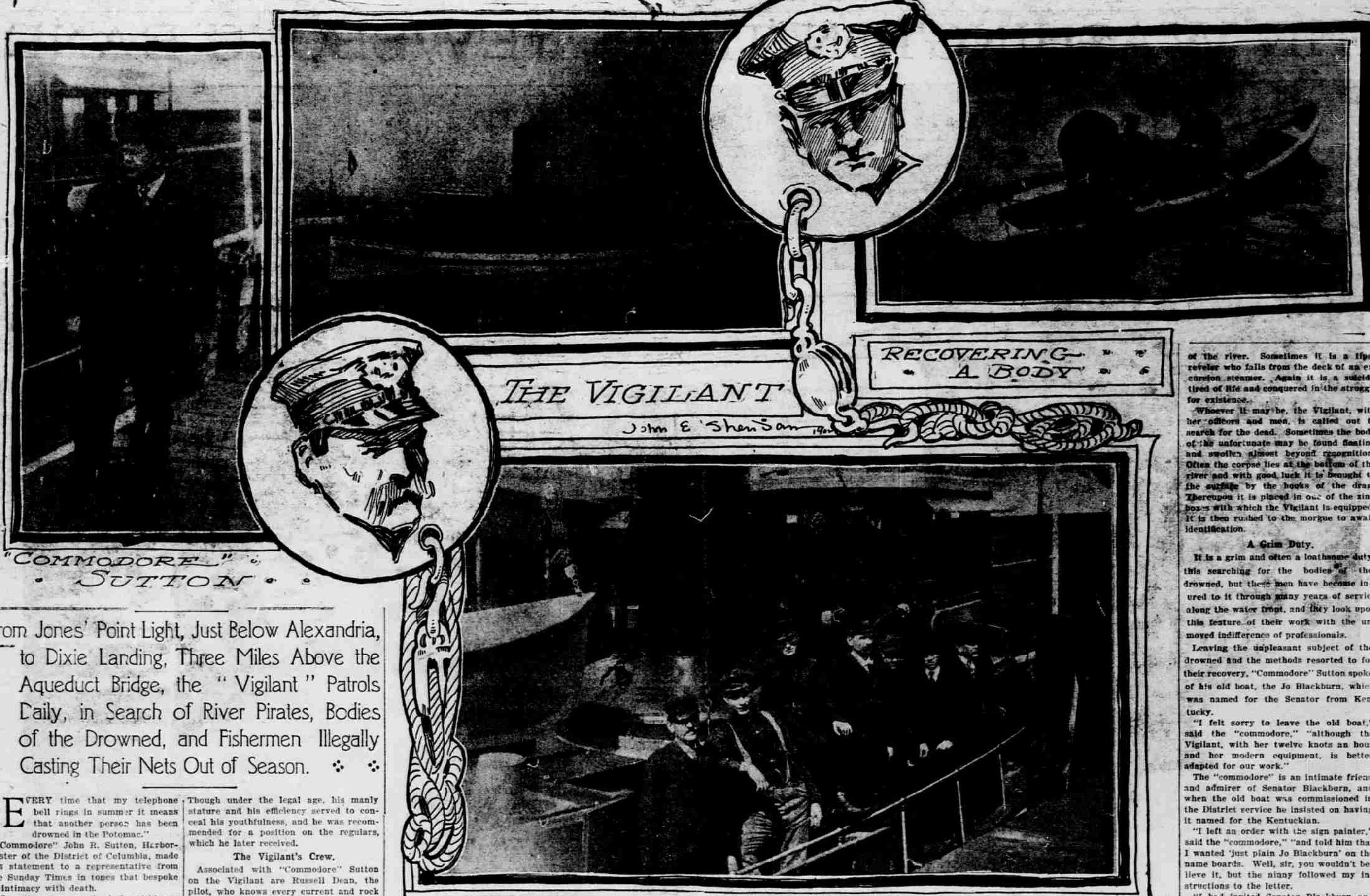


ON THE POTOMAC WITH "COMMODORE" SUTTON



From Jones' Point Light, just below Alexandria, to Dixie Landing, Three Miles Above the Aqueduct Bridge, the "Vigilant" Patrols Daily, in Search of River Pirates, Bodies of the Drowned, and Fishermen Illegally Casting Their Nets Out of Season.

EVERY time that my telephone bell rings in summer it means that another person has been drowned in the Potomac.

"Commadore" John R. Sutton, Harbor-master of the District of Columbia, made this statement to a representative from The Sunday Times in tones that bespoke an intimacy with death.

"Sometimes we get the body within an hour or two after death. Often weeks pass before the river gives up its dead. Sometimes it is never found."

The commadore did not speak flippantly, but rather more indifferently, like a physician, for instance, or an undertaker, whose familiarity with death breeds a sort of professional indifference to it, in whatever hideous form it may present itself.

Patrolled Potomac Since 1883.

Since 1883 "Commadore" Sutton has patrolled the waters of the Potomac as Harbor-master. For two years previous to that date he had been detailed from the local police force to act in his present capacity, but the office which he now fills had not then been formally created.

From Jones' Point Light just below Alexandria, to Dixie Landing, three miles above Aqueduct Bridge, and up the Eastern Branch as far as navigation is possible, the "commadore" cruises aboard his flagship Vigilant in search of river pirates, bodies of the drowned, and fishermen illegally casting their nets out of season.

While in the summer months he hunts the small boy who bathes without a proper regard for the conventions in the matter of dress. A busy time of it has the "commadore" to do all these things well, but thus he does them, and grows fat in the doing thereof.

"Commadore" Is a Giant.

This powerful ruler of the river front is of kingly proportions, weighing very nearly 300 pounds, but he is of imperial stature and broad of shoulder. Old King Cole himself was not a jollier soul than this monarch of the Potomac. His service to the District of Columbia dates back to 1866, when, at the age of nineteen, he received a commission as special policeman.

Though under the legal age, his manly stature and his efficiency served to conceal his youthfulness, and he was recommended for a position on the regulars, which he later received.

The Vigilant's Crew.

Associated with "Commadore" Sutton on the Vigilant are Russell Dean, the pilot, who knows every current and rock in the river; Engineer James Neale, Fireman Maurice Hughes, and the crew, consisting of S. B. Lewis, J. J. Perry, H. C. Jones, W. H. Sutton, and Edward Ashton. Those who know "Commadore" Sutton also know the hospitality of the Vigilant. An invitation to take a trip on the swift harbor patrol is a corollary to an acquaintance with the "commadore," and when The Sunday Times representative made himself known to the commadore he was immediately invited to the quarter-deck of the Vigilant.

Steam Always Kept Up.

Steam was up, as it always is, on the police boat, in readiness for any emergency.

"On the way, Russ," said the "commadore" to Pilot Russell Dean.

"Cast off," echoed Russ to the deck hands.

"All gone, sir," respectfully responded the able-bodied seamen of the Vigilant.

Thereupon we backed out into mid-stream, and Pilot Dean gave the speed jingle to Engineer Neale. We skirted the sea wall of the Potomac flats at a taut clip, almost within sweep of the beautiful willows that fringe the banks.

"There is a class of people in Washington that makes a living from those willow trees," said the "commadore."

"How is that, 'commadore'?"

"Well, sir," he replied, "all the rustic benches that you see in the front yards and on the porches around town were made from the wood that the peddlers cut from those trees yonder. It is one of the recognized industries of Washington, and when you buy one of those benches you are getting home materials made by home labor."

It was suggested to the "commadore" that he "smoke up" on some reminiscences of his cruises on the river, and by way of furnishing him with inspiration The Times photographer offered him a stogie. The "commadore," after lighting up, warned to his task.

"I'll never forget," he observed, with a far-away look in his eyes, "the night I landed on the flats with twenty-five policemen. We were hunting for a fugitive who was wanted at Headquarters by the Major."

Here the "commadore" became so absorbed in the memory of that night that he forgot to proceed.

"Did you find him?" asked the man from The Sunday Times.

"Find him?" exclaimed the "commadore." "Did you say find him? Why, my boy, it was daylight before we found ourselves. You see that grass there? Well, in summer it grows higher than a man's head and every one of the twenty-five was hopelessly lost in it until the sun came up to give us our bearings."

"Whom were you hunting?" asked the man from The Times.

"I don't just recall now who it was," cautiously replied the "commadore."

"Dorsey Foulz," suggested the writer, as a help to the "commadore's" memory.

A black look clouded the weather-stained visage of the monarch of the Potomac and in his wrath he roared in a tone that drowned the whistling of the stiff gale from the west.

"How did you find that out?"

The writer, as representative of The Sunday Times, modestly confessed that in his official capacity he could not be otherwise than omniscient, and this plea served

to mellow the anger of the "commadore."

"Candidly," he acknowledged, "it was that 'black' will-o'-the-wisp, Dorsey Foulz, who caused twenty-five men from the metropolitan police force to lose themselves in the jungles of the Potomac flats."

By this time Pilot Russ Dean had swung the prow of the Vigilant to the channel to the west of the flats and we were headed for Long Bridge. "Commadore" Sutton was himself again, seemingly having forgotten the passion to which he had been aroused by the mention of the name of Dorsey Foulz.

Wonderful Vegetation.

"Some great vegetables are raised on those flats," he said. "Last summer the watermelons were half as big as whisky barrels and the turnips weighed, on an average, nine pounds."

"Better throw that cigar away, John," advised Pilot Dean from the wheelhouse, and calling The Times man to him he said in a whisper, "I never heard the 'commadore' talk that way before, you didn't do his smoke did you?"

The pilot was assured that we had done nothing to furnish his chief with artificial inspiration.

"About them watermelons and and turnips," resumed the "commadore." "Mind you, I didn't say that I saw them. It was told to me and I reckon it was Russ Dean who tried to make me believe it. Russ is a good pilot but you can't trust him when he gets to talking vegetables."

The pilot had signalled the drawtower on Long Bridge to open the draw and slowly a huge section of the structure was

swinging on its pivot. The Vigilant headed for the opening through which the current was rushing at the rate of eight miles an hour. The steady hand of Pilot Dean at the wheel kept the craft on its course and the passage was made without incident.

A Magnificent Outlook.

At this point of the Potomac the outlook is magnificent. All the beauties of the Capital are in view. The Capitol itself looms up like a mountain of marble, and the dome of the Congressional Library becomes a great ball of fire in the sunlight. Directly ahead the Washington Monument cleaves the sky, and beyond it the White House nestles within a woodland framework already green in spring-time foliage. Off to the southwest, and rising high above the waters of the river, are the heights of Arlington, where the most striking object to meet the eye is the old Lee home at the summit of the hill.

Fishing boats dotted the Potomac in Four Mile Run, which stretch of water is out of the jurisdiction of the District Harbor Patrol.

"We can't go after the fishermen yet," said the "commadore," "but we keep a sharp eye on them out on this part of the river."

Unlawful to Seine Fish.

It is unlawful to seine fish on the river, and very little of it, if any, is done. "Commadore" Sutton watched very closely, night and day, so that it is indeed a foolhardy fisherman who ventures to seine fish in the waters which the Vigilant patrols.

As to the boys swimming in summer," said "Commadore" Sutton, as we passed through the opening in the Long Bridge on the return trip, "the moment we are out of sight they are splashing in the water."

"Why molest them?" asked the photographer.

"The reason, my friend, may best be suggested by an old story which you may have heard," replied the "commadore."

"In a country school one day the school-marm was instructing a class in sentence building. Addressing herself to one youngster, who knew more about the old swimming hole in the creek and birds' eggs than he did about sentences, the school-marm said:

"Johnnie, give me a sentence in which are used the three words, boys, bees, and bear."

"Johnnie thought for a minute and then excitedly hollered:

"I got it, ma'am."

"Well, Johnnie, what is the sentence including the three words I gave you?" asked the teacher.

"Boys bees bare when they go in swimmin'," shouted Johnnie, and that," continued the "commadore," "is the reason why we have to hound the youngsters during the warm weather."

Searching for Dead Bodies.

The duty of searching for the bodies of the drowned is the most important work of the harbor patrol. As Commadore Sutton says, almost every telephone call to the office of the Harbor-master in summer is the death knell of a poor creature who has met death in some part

of the river. Sometimes it is a tipsy refeller who falls from the deck of a excursion steamer. Again it is a suicide, tired of life and conquered in the struggle for existence.

Whoever it may be, the Vigilant, with her officers and men, is called out to search for the dead. Sometimes the body of the unfortunate may be found floating and swollen, almost beyond recognition. Often the corpse lies at the bottom of the river and with good luck it is brought to the surface by the hooks of the drag.

Wherever it is placed in one of the zinc boxes with which the Vigilant is equipped, it is then rushed to the morgue to await identification.

A Grim Duty.

It is a grim and often a loathsome duty, this searching for the bodies of the drowned, but these men have become inured to it through many years of service along the water front, and they look upon this feature of their work with the unmoved indifference of professionals.

Leaving the unpleasant subject of the drowned and the methods resorted to for their recovery, "Commadore" Sutton spoke of his old boat, the Jo Blackburn, which was named for the Senator from Kentucky.

"I felt sorry to leave the old boat," said the "commadore." "Although the Vigilant, with her twelve knots an hour and her modern equipment, is better adapted for our work."

The "commadore" is an intimate friend and admirer of Senator Blackburn, and when the old boat was commissioned in the District service he insisted on having it named for the Kentuckian.

"I left an order with the sign painter," said the "commadore," "and told him that I wanted 'just plain Jo Blackburn' on the name boards. Well, sir, you wouldn't believe it, but the sign painter followed my instructions to the letter."

"I had invited Senator Blackburn and some of his friends to accompany us on the day that the boat was to go into commission, and had insisted that the signs be ready for that occasion and that they be sent to the wharf."

"I had some business at Police Headquarters early that morning, but told the boys to put the signs in place as soon as they arrived."

"That was the only occasion on which I got mad with them for obeying orders," continued the commadore sorrowfully.

"When I returned from uptown, some of my guests had arrived and among them the Senator himself. I had intended to surprise him with the sign boards and I reckon I succeeded. The boys had put them in place on the wheelhouse and the Senator was sitting under one of them."

"Was he pleased?" asked The Times man.

"Ticked to death," replied the commadore, with a chuckle. "That fool sign painter had gone and painted 'Plain Jo Blackburn' on those name boards, and I reckon that if the Senator hadn't been such a handsome man he would have been right mad with the commadore. He took it as a good joke on himself and me and we had lots of fun over it."

End of the Cruise.

By this time the Vigilant was back at her berth and the cruise was at an end. The boat was made fast to await orders from Headquarters or an emergency call from some place along the shore.

An emergency came the next day when the big water front fire broke out and the shipping was in danger. The Vigilant saved \$20,000 worth of craft by towing them beyond the reach of the flames, which fast asleep speaks volumes for the efficiency of the Harbor Police service.

"But your bills; they must be enormous!"

"They are seldom excessive. My butcher has been with me for years."

"Years? I think myself lucky if I can keep one of the creatures more than a month."

"My man markets for me as though it were for himself."

"He has probably some understanding with the tradespeople."

"Probably."

"A percentage."

"His percentage?"

"Does he ever take a drop too much? I fancy I've noticed that."

"Alas, dear lady, man is weak, and butlers are only men, after all. My treasure fails by the wayside twice a year regularly. He tells me that it is his birthday."

"Twice a year? And you believe him?"

"No, but I allow him to think so. Probably one of his birthdays is his mother's birthday, or his sweetheart's. The day after he has recovered the choicest flowers decorate the dinner table, the service is perfect, and on we go again for another six months like this."

"I should discharge him on the spot."

"Of course you would, but where should you send him? He is my bi-annual butler. I'm sure I couldn't. Hence—"

"This dinner! It is perfectly served—and so well cooked!"

"Cathartically, the cook is in love with the butler, and when they are married—in June—I expect them to go on keeping house for me."

The philosophy that conducts the bachelor establishment to a successful issue in Washington, as elsewhere, is based upon individuality; the trained servants are allowed to have their own way to a certain point, and each is thus placed upon his or her mettle.

"How do you know what you are going to give us for dinner?"

"I never know. All I say is, something new every day; never the same old menu, so that people who dine here will get to know the specialties de la maison."

Bachelor halls in Washington include some of the Embassy, notably the German Embassy, where Ambassador von Holleben is the grand bachelor par excellence, and their luncheons and dinners are a social and courteous host, and an occasional giver of dinners, with a periodical reception and a small dance into the bargain.

The Russian Ambassador is a widower, but has his adopted daughter, the Comtesse Marguerite Cassini, at hand to serve as hostess, while the Ambassador of France, thanks to the disinclination of Mrs. Cambon to cross the Atlantic, is virtually placed in the position of a bachelor, and is assisted in receiving by either Mme. de Margerie, the wife of the first secretary, or Mme. Vignal, the wife of the military attaché, or both.

The bachelor-host embassies are musical and generally artistic; both ambassadors are patrons of the arts, and the conversation largely turns on composers and dramatists and their interpreters, as

well as on portraiture, in which M. Cambon is something of a critic. Bachelor hall is also kept by the minister of the New Netherlands, the minister of Sweden, the minister of Denmark, and the charge d'affaires of Spain, and, during the past year or so by the Swiss minister, M. Pioda, ill-mannered in the family having detained Madame Pioda in Europe.

Some of the legations rejoice in gardens, one of which is carefully cultivated by Mr. Riane, the Spanish charge d'affaires. A couple of Russian secretaries of embassy have set up an establishment of their own, and when it comes to our native American contingent, bachelor hall is severely kept by Messrs. Preston and Huxley Rivers among the widowers, and by the Messrs. Edward Buckley, Blair, and others among the single men.

Some of our wealthy Congressmen, whose wives are invalids or indisposed, are also virtually installed in a bachelor hall of their own so far as Washington is concerned, and their luncheons and dinners are a social and courteous host, and an occasional giver of dinners, with a periodical reception and a small dance into the bargain.

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Some of the legations rejoice in gardens, one of which is carefully cultivated by Mr. Riane, the Spanish charge d'affaires. A couple of Russian secretaries of embassy have set up an establishment of their own, and when it comes to our native American contingent, bachelor hall is severely kept by Messrs. Preston and Huxley Rivers among the widowers, and by the Messrs. Edward Buckley, Blair, and others among the single men.

Some of our wealthy Congressmen, whose wives are invalids or indisposed, are also virtually installed in a bachelor hall of their own so far as Washington is concerned, and their luncheons and dinners are a social and courteous host, and an occasional giver of dinners, with a periodical reception and a small dance into the bargain.

The Russian Ambassador is a widower, but has his adopted daughter, the Comtesse Marguerite Cassini, at hand to serve as hostess, while the Ambassador of France, thanks to the disinclination of